



News Release

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MERIDIAN SCHOOL BUSES TO BURN BIODIESEL
GENERAL USE OF B20 SOARS IN TREASURE VALLEY

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Nearly 200 Meridian School District buses began today to run on B20 biodiesel, part of a detailed air quality study designed to show how the fuel could reduce childrens' exposure to hazardous diesel emission, the Idaho Energy Division announced today.

The buses will consume approximately 9,000 gallons of B20 biodiesel weekly and will run on the fuel through at least March. Officials say it will then be up to the Meridian School District as to whether or not to continue using the cleaner burning biodiesel.

National research has shown that biodiesel can reduce harmful emissions from diesel by upwards of 20 percent. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency research has shown that children are probably the group most at risk from harmful particulates found in diesel exhaust emissions. Particulates can be drawn directly into the lungs when breathed, bypassing the body's natural defenses.

The Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho is conducting the study as part of its on-going efforts to improve air quality in the Treasure Valley. United Oil of Nampa is supplying the B20 fuel for the research project.

The school bus biodiesel fuel use is a major step forward in the growing use of biofuels in the Treasure Valley, according to biofuel managers with the Idaho Energy Division.

In 2003 public and private sector vehicles burned more than 173,000 gallons of B20 biodiesel in the valley. That was almost four times the 43,946 gallons burned in 2003 when the Energy Division introduced its B20 demonstration program in the valley.

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“Most significantly, we have found that in 2003 more than 90,000 gallons of B20 was sold to the public at the only biodiesel outlet in the area – the Kicks 66 station on the corner of Emerald and Five Mile that opened in April,” said Dick Larsen, B20 program manager for the Idaho Energy Division.

The remaining 83,634 gallons of B20 fuel used in 2003 represented fuel sold to agencies participating in the Energy Division’s B20 buy-down program, Larsen said. Under that program, Federal dollars are being used to pay the difference in cost between regular and biodiesel as an incentive to get fleets to try and hopefully switch to permanently the cleaner-burning B20 fuel.

Statewide, the Idaho Energy Division’s B20 program has resulted in more than 240,000 gallons of B20 being burned since April 2002. There are now three public outlets selling B20 in the southern half of Idaho: Boise, Twin Falls and Shoshone. A fourth outlet was opened in Vale, Oregon to help service western Idaho and eastern Oregon.

A variety of vehicle fleets in the Treasure Valley besides the Meridian School District now regularly use B20 biodiesel. These include the Sanitary Services Company in Meridian, recycling trucks with BFI Idaho, Incident Response Units with the Idaho Department of Transportation, City of Nampa Street and Water Department vehicles, and buses with the Boise Head Start program.

A wide range of other private sector and individual’s vehicles, that fuel at the B20 public outlet at the Kicks 66 station, also use B20 regularly. Statistics show public purchase of the B20 averaged about 10,000 gallons per month since the station opened last April. That figure is expected to increase as more users learn the biodiesel is available, Larsen added.

B20 fuel is produced by a blend of 80 percent petroleum diesel and 20 percent biodiesel, which is produced from soybeans. The fuel typically costs about 15 cents per gallon more than regular petroleum diesel.

For more information on B20 biodiesel, visit the B20 Idaho website at **www.idahobiofuel.org** or contact the Idaho Energy Division at (208) 327-7900.